

TRAIL & Landscape

A PUBLICATION CONCERNED WITH
NATURAL HISTORY AND CONSERVATION



TRAIL & LANDSCAPE

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THE OTTAWA FIELD-NATURALISTS' CLUB - Founded 1879 -

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Objectives of the Club: To promote the appreciation, preservation and conservation of Canada's natural heritage; to encourage investigation and publish the results of research in all fields of natural history and to diffuse information on these fields as widely as possible; to support and co-operate with organizations engaged in preserving, maintaining or restoring environments of high quality for living things.

Club Publications: *THE CANADIAN FIELD-NATURALIST*, devoted to publishing research in natural history. *TRAIL & LANDSCAPE*, a non-technical publication of general interest to local naturalists.

Field Trips, Lectures and other natural history activities are arranged for local members.
See inside back cover.

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TRAIL & *Landscape*

Vol 8 No 5

Published by

THE OTTAWA FIELD-NATURALISTS' CLUB
Box 3264 Postal Station C,
Ottawa, Ontario
K1Y 4J5

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CALL FOR NOMINATIONS
FOR THE 1975 COUNCIL

Do you know a capable Club member with energy and enthusiasm who has time to take an active part in Club affairs? You, perhaps?

Expertise in natural history is not as important as a desire to participate. Don't forget that the Club's business spans many interests - education, conservation, excursions and lectures, publications, finance, membership. The Club can not function without the participation of its members.

The Nominating Committee will consider all suggestions phoned to them, or if you wish, submit a formal nomination.

Formal nominations should be made in writing and should include a statement from the nominee that he is willing to serve. Get a seconder. Send your nomination to

The Nominating Committee,
The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club,
Box 3264, Postal Station C,
Ottawa K1Y 4J5

BEFORE NOVEMBER 15, 1974

The slate of candidates for officers and additional members of the 1975 Council will be voted on at the Annual Business Meeting in January; no additional nominations will be accepted from the floor.

Chairman, Joyce Reddoch (749-5363)



F.O.N. NEWS

Federation of Ontario Naturalists - A brief resumé of Resolutions passed at Annual Meeting held at Kingston, Ontario, on June 8, 1974, and forwarded to respective governments.

...urges setting up of an immediate Order-in-Council, to establish a complete embargo on importation of all endangered species, and their derivative products; power to enforce such an Order; and to close all loopholes...urges formulation of an explicit population policy, to which secondary policies including transportation, development, and immigration are directly tied ...urges complete withdrawal of Mackenzie pipeline construction until long-term interests of Canada and alternative methods of serving those interests have been fully considered..urges that environmental impact assessment procedures apply to all proposals, whether of provincial, municipal, or of private origin which are likely to have significant environmental effects...recommendations of Final Report on Motorized Snow Vehicles and All-Terrain Vehicles welcomed - urges introduction of legislation, and that implementation of the recommendations occur immediately thereafter...urges a complete halt to channelization of streams and a complete public re-evaluation of provincial and conservation authority policies toward construction of impoundments on watersheds...urges formation of a provincial management policy on Ontario's wetlands habitat and implementation of such policies...Ministry commended on its actions to expand and upgrade wildlife extension programs - urges further expansion and promotion of this program with particular emphasis upon present and anticipated urban areas of the province...opposes the construction of a highway linking Moosonee with southern Ontario...to consider as integral components in its planning of Northern Ontario, the preservation of large tracts of wilderness areas as set out by the Coalition for Wilderness...urges acceptance of a land-use classification of "ecological" or "environmental" protection zoning, that it develop criteria for application of such zoning, and that it encourage use of such in official municipal plans.

Vi Humphreys
F.O.N. Affairs Committee

Faith Rewarded

A BOTANICAL ADVENTURE

by R. E. Whiting



A plant there is, extremely rare,
In northern climes but seldom seen
Though often sought with greatest care;
And it is red, not green.

It hides in juicy bogs and fens
It shyly blooms in early June.
To find it, brave mosquito wens,
But not too late nor soon.

Some call it Southern Twayblade,
But if you call an apple "malus",
Preferring words of Latin made,
Just call this Listera australis.

In Canada but six locations,
Revealed piecemeal the decades o'er,
Rewarded patient explorations;
We said "There should be more."

Known sites were to the east of here,
The province of our homes had one,
And even there for seventy year
No plants were seen, ho hum!

Elusive dwarves with two small leaves
That offer up a sheaf of flowers,
Worthy representatives
Of fifty orchids, ours.

"Ontario Orchids" we called our list,
By faith including this Twayblade.
And now we hope you get the gist
Of which this poem's made.

If not, hear on! Two friends
Regarded L. australis' inclusion
As out of date. We made amends:
We found some plants to clear confusion.

We, Paul and Em, inspected
Aerial photos of Alfred Bog,
And soon therefrom selected
Likely parts through which to slog.

Sheila also came along
According to our wishes;
(An M Sc in Botany; wrong!
Not just to do the dishes).

With camp set up beside a quarry,
We three set out one day,
Approached the climax of our story,
Bridged a ditch and found our way

Along a channel to a leaning birch,
Then hit the bush by pace and compass;
The photoed "openings" we would search
While mosquitoes hummed to pump us.

Warm the day and wet the footing,
On we struggled through the gloom
Till we noticed trees a-thinning,
Now it happened, nearly noon.

Said Paul to Em who knew australis
(The others only from the book),
"When the habitat's right just hail us
And we'll come and have a look".

Soon Em stopped, his bag to park
On small tamarack out of wet
Of soggy Sphagnum as a mark,
Called "It will be here, I bet".

We combed the edges with much zeal,
Searched the glade with prying eyes;
Cranberry and False Solomon's Seal,
But not a sign of orchid prize.

And then, enhungered and athirst,
Em sought the bag for lunch;
And now he came to fear the worst,
It was a fearful crunch;

He skirted anxiously around,
He searched at time-consuming cost,
He called -- but could not hear a sound
The bag, or he, was lost!

At end of more bewildering search
He saw them in the sunlight,
And spied the bag upon its perch,
Relieved to make his loss right.

He took the bag, and glancing down
He saw a plant he'd stepped on;
It was the orchid of renown,
The Twayblade that he'd dreamt on!

He hailed the others, "Come and see
What it is you look for".
They came and saw, then had a spree,
In minutes found ten more.

Then followed lunch, more slogging,
In end some forty of australis,
But heat and thirst are flogging;
We hike for camp, drink and swim regale us.

Then back next day to photograph
The newly rediscovered prize,
And acknowledge with a laugh
That faith and work are wise.

Sequel there is: within a week,
Learning details of our success,
Friends sought and found the self-same plant
Two hundred miles a-farther west.

To look for Twayblades in new places
Come next June we all shall go;
To Loon Lake Bog we've set our faces;
Hooray for old Ontario!

Weston, Ont.
December 1973

Note that naturalists from the Toronto area snuck in and found these rare orchids in one of OUR bogs - we were scooped! A more sedate and scientific account of these same discoveries can be found in The Canadian Field-Naturalist for July-Sept. 1974 (Vol. 88 No.3). T & L is the place for a light-hearted look at natural history; publication of the stodgy stuff we leave to our elder sister journal. In the matter of food for thought we trust Ottawa naturalists are getting a balanced diet.



This is the goal -
Southern Twayblade,
about life size,
a tiny, red and green
plant growing in red
and green sphagnum
moss.

Note the mosquito.



Alfred Bog where
Southern Twayblade
grows, a mile or so
from the nearest
road.



photos by Reddoch

1879



1979

Centennial Planning

In March 1979 the Club will complete its first Century!

What are we going to do to celebrate our Birthday?

Should we:

publish a book?

establish a scholarship?

have a party?

conserve a natural area?

sponsor field research?

call for commemorative stamps?

or....ignore the whole thing?



The Planning Group want your ideas about how you
want to see your Club commemorate the event. Write to

Centennial Planning Group,
Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club
Box 3264 Postal Station C
Ottawa K1Y 4J5

or phone

Chuck Gruchy
996-1755 (office)

Hue MacKenzie
722-8847 (home)

The Winter of the OWL



by Brian Morin
photos by the author

There is probably no single variety of bird that excites the mind and touches the hearts of men as does the owl. This silent flier of the avian world has been referred to with such widely differing adjectives as fierce, majestic, cute, wise, and in some cases, even tame. Depending on the species and the individual, one or more of the aforementioned may apply.

Just about everyone will agree, however, that owls in general are intriguing. Their physical appearance, their actions and their habits are so vastly different from those of other birds that one can't help but recognize owls as being in a class of their own. It is little wonder that many people will go out of their way to have a look at one. This is especially true during the winter months, for it is at this time that rare northern species (some of which have been described as being among the most beautiful of all) occasionally make their appearance in the Ottawa area. In particularly severe winters or when food is in short supply in the north, the southern forests of Canada may be invaded by literally hundreds of owls. The last was such a winter.

Between November 1973 and March 1974, a total of ten species of owls was recorded in the Ottawa area. Of these, only half can be expected at this time. The following synopsis outlines the species of owls, as well as the individuals which were recorded. Note in particular the incursion of northern species.



SCREECH OWL This species is a permanent resident throughout its range and can therefore be located in the Ottawa area at any time of the year. The Screech Owl has never been common here, however, and any reported sighting is noteworthy.

- one was heard north of Templeton, Quebec on December 16, the Ottawa Christmas Census
- the resident pair in the woods near Billings Bridge Shopping Plaza was reported regularly throughout the winter
- one was reported from Carlsbad Springs on March 31

GREAT HORNED OWL Another permanent resident, the Great Horned Owl is the commonest owl in the region. Its abundance becomes evident in late winter when nesting activity is under way and both male and female can be heard calling in the pre-dawn hours. Their presence may be given away in daylight by the clamouring of crows.

SNOWY OWL Snowies were decidedly scarce this winter, in spite of the relative abundance of other northern species. Only one was seen on our Christmas Census and a total of 7 was the best we could do for the entire winter. Included in these is an unusual instance in which one was found dead near Somerset St. and Wellington, well within the city.

HAWK OWL Of all the owls to turn up last winter, this species was probably observed by more people than any other, thanks to two very regular individuals, one in Richmond and the other on Pine Road at Albion. Both were regularly sighted atop trees where they spent most of their time scanning for small rodents. Occasionally a lucky viewer would witness one of the birds swoop and dive on a meadow vole, then return to its perch where lunch was hastily devoured. To be able to see such an event is nothing short of exciting, but to be able to watch through a telescope from only 40 yards away is too much for words.

- the Hawk Owl on Pine Rd. arrived around beginning of November and remained until end of February
- the bird in Richmond, Ont. was first sighted on December 31 and likewise remained till late February
- one was seen at Lac Phillipe on January 13
another was sighted in the Harwood Plains area on January 20
- an additional observation came from Ridge Road near the Mer Bleue on February 17
- the last recorded sighting of any Hawk Owl was a new bird seen on Cedarview Road on February 24
- although outside the area, 2 Hawk Owls spotted the same day in early January, near Hawkesbury, are worth noting



BARRED OWL There were several individual Barred Owls reported, but the one most readily found was in the woods behind Carlington ski hill. This bird remained there for most of the winter and appeared to have a healthy diet of small rodents, as revealed by its numerous pellets.

- the first observation of the winter was in Blackburn Hamlet, December 9
- one was reported on the Christmas Count, December 16
- the regular at Carlington woods arrived in late December and remained until March
- one was seen in Westwood, February 4
- another fairly regular bird turned up on February 20 near Carling & Island Park Dr. and stayed several weeks.

GREAT GRAY OWL The individual that turned up near Munster, Ont. (5 mi w. of Richmond) was the most reliable one of this species recorded over the winter. Often observers were able to spot the owl within a few moments of approaching the woods. There were also numerous trips to those woods that failed, however. In my case, the first attempt at locating this individual was unsuccessful. After tramping for some time through cedar and hardwood woodlots, my wife and I turned up little more than a few Chickadees. Others had the same luck that day. Fortunately, luck changed with our next attempt and we, along with several anxious birders, were afforded breath-taking views of a truly beautiful bird. Pictures say the rest. Before it left its temporary residence for more northern climes, this bird was seen by many people, some coming from as far away as Virginia. That's dedication.

- an early report of a Great Gray was from Pine Road on January 7
- the Munster bird was first observed February 10 and last seen in late February
- on the same day that bird was found, another turned up in the Carp Hills but was only seen once
- somewhat less reliable but regular nevertheless, a Great Gray was found at Constance Bay, February 12 that stayed till late February
- the last report was February 24 on the Armstrong Rd.



Barred Owl

Great Gray Owl



Prints by W. Stafford

from colour slides
by Brian Morin

LONG-EARED OWL Considered quite rare in Ottawa at one time, the Long-Eared is being reported with greater regularity as more observers become familiar with its call, the feature by which it is most often identified.

- a sight record in Ottawa of this species is most unusual, but as luck has it, one was seen on the Christmas Census. This is also the first Census record for Ottawa
- one was also heard near the Nepean dump on March 1

SHORT-EARED OWL Short-Eared Owls are more readily observed during migration but occasionally put in an appearance during the winter months.

- one was seen near the Ottawa Dump on February 19
- another was spotted on March 9 on Limebank Road

BOREAL OWL This has got to be one of the most talked about of all the owls. Every winter, hopeful observers search the Ottawa and area evergreens for this northern rarity but fail to come up with anything. That's because Boreal Owls have a built-in eluding device -- their size. Their choice of habitat in which to hunt doesn't help much either. Looking up into the branches



of spruce and cedars for a black blob sandwiched against the trunk can be a very frustrating exercise indeed. The solution to the problem is simple: you don't look for them. Let the roving bands of Chickadees and Nuthatches do it for you. They're a dead giveaway with their noisy chatters and whistles, as several lucky people found out this past winter.

Imagine the excitement that Mike Runtz from Arnprior must have felt when he was attracted to a group of agitated Chickadees in Aylmer, only to discover that the source of their anticipation was a Boreal Owl -- and that was on the Ottawa Christmas Census, no less. Unfortunately, no one else was able to see this individual. This routine was repeated several times over the course of the winter.

- the bird seen on the Christmas Census was not seen again
- one Boreal was seen at Lac Phillipe, January 13
- numerous people were alerted about a Boreal Owl seen near Wakefield, March 3, which wasn't seen again

SAW-WHET OWL Although a fairly common breeder in the Ottawa area, the Saw-Whet Owl is quite rare in the winter.

- one was seen on the Christmas Count in S-E Ottawa
- another was captured in Gatineau Park and released; the bird was so tame that it could be picked up

S.W.E.E.P. - In The Mer Bleue

At last we are to have a guide to everything that has been learned about the Mer Bleue under one cover. All of us - naturalists, scientists, the general public, and the N.C.C. - will benefit.

Last summer Dr. Robert Reid, an ecologist at the University of Ottawa, directed a S.W.E.E.P. project (Students Working in an Environment Enhancement Program under the auspices of the Ministry of Natural Resources) to compile a detailed report on that important natural asset, the Mer Bleue peat bog and surrounding marshes and ridges. Four college and post-graduate students, Michel Dorais, Rachelle Bouffard, Robert Chenier and Kristen Adamson, devoted considerable effort towards this task. Their activities were many and varied:

- compiling an annotated bibliography of all articles and papers published on the Mer Bleue; for example, The Canadian Field-Naturalist is a rich source of material,
- surveying various organizations such as our Club for the uses made of the Mer Bleue area and for details of the natural history of the Mer Bleue like information on breeding birds and locations of orchids,
- interviewing scientific researchers who use the Mer Bleue in their studies,
- contacting the universities as well as public and secondary schools to assess their uses of the Mer Bleue for environmental education,
- compiling a history of human activities in the vicinity of the Mer Bleue,
- doing field work, especially to study vegetative associations, human impact and drainage.

This report will serve to guide the N.C.C. in planning development of the Mer Bleue area as an outdoor recreation and nature study area.

Joyce Reddoch

A "NEW" LADIES'-TRESSES ORCHID: Spiranthes intermedia

Allan and Joyce Reddoch

"Yes, that's definitely Spiranthes intermedia!" We could easily spot the spiral of creamy flowers from the car through the close-cropped weeds beside the road. Why were we searching the roadsides in the hills of Quebec in early September for a charming but unspectacular plant less than a foot high?

Well, here and there in the literature descriptions of this plant have appeared for many years. When it was not considered to be some form of Nodding Ladies'-Tresses, Spiranthes cernua, or some hybrid of it, it was thought to be a northern form of Spring Ladies'-Tresses, S. vernalis, which is found from Massachusetts south.

In recent years, E. M. Whiting (see p. 121) has found many of these plants with the creamy, spiralled flowers in Muskoka. Last year he invited members of the Club's Orchid Location Survey and Carl Luer (author of "The Native Orchids of Florida" and a forthcoming companion volume covering the rest of North America) to have a look at these plants. It was agreed that here was a distinct species new to science. Carl Luer recommended, after going through the literature, that the new species be called Spiranthes intermedia, a name proposed 70 years ago. It has no common name yet.

While in Muskoka we learned that a herbarium specimen collected in Papineau Co., Quebec, in 1947 by Bill Cody, J. A. Calder and W. A. Marshall, and identified then as Nodding Ladies'-Tresses, was now regarded as the new species. To see if such plants still existed we obtained more precise directions to the location and then headed along the back roads northwest of Thurso.



The "new" species
Spiranthes intermedia



Nodding Ladies'-Tresses
Spiranthes cernua

Both photographs show the flowering stalks at about twice life-size.

This Nodding Ladies'-Tresses has only a single spiral instead of the usual three or four. This example was chosen for closer comparison with the single spiralled Spiranthes intermedia.

Getting out of the car we found 8 plants of S. intermedia in full bloom growing amidst 55 plants of Nodding Ladies'-Tresses, which were just beginning to flower. Here, after 27 years, the plants are still growing along the same road, although probably not at the same site as before, for the vegetation has changed over that period of time.

The two species are easy to distinguish when they are growing together, once the differences have been pointed out. S. intermedia has a single, very open spiral of smallish, creamy white flowers. In contrast, Nodding Ladies'-Tresses usually appears to consist of about three tightly wound spirals of larger, very white flowers; the plant is somewhat shorter. In the stand which we saw, the Nodding Ladies'-Tresses had a distinct, rich odour, while the S. intermedia plants seemed not to have any. S. intermedia has been described as growing on slightly higher, drier ground than the Nodding Ladies'-Tresses, but in this case they share the same habitat - a moist, sandy area which may have been cut over earlier in the year to keep down the weeds.

Such cutting sometimes helps late blooming orchids since it removes competition for sunlight. Of course, if the area were to be cut or sprayed late in the year, these orchids would be destroyed. The Nodding Ladies'-Tresses is thought to be one of a number of plants which move into disturbed areas until they are eventually driven out by the growth of shrubs. Before the white man cleared the land, such areas would have been infrequent, and accordingly, such orchids would have been rare. Now, ditches and other disturbed areas are fairly common, and so is the Nodding Ladies'-Tresses. Thus human activity can favour some wild species.

We have searched some of the rich stands of Nodding Ladies'-Tresses in Gloucester Township for the new species, but have not found any plants. However, we are aware that most, if not all, of the more than 25 sites known for S. intermedia are on the Precambrian Shield.

Thus S. intermedia remains in Papineau Co. in spite of changing nomenclature and changing countryside.

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CHRISTMAS CARDS

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MANY THANKS

With a little help from its friends, TRAIL & LANDSCAPE has survived another year. We are especially grateful to Dr. Louis Lemieux, Director of the National Museum of Natural Sciences, and his secretary, Mrs. Dorothea Freeborn, for the use of their offices, and to Mr. B. Chapman and Mr. W. Stafford, who assisted with reproduction of photographs.

The Editors

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CLUB MEETINGS
FOR
NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER

arranged by the Excursion and Lectures Committee
Roger A. Foxall (745-7791), Chairman

Tuesday
12 November

THE MUSKOXEN OF BATHURST ISLAND

by Dr. David Gray (Assistant Curator,
Vertebrate Ethology, National Museum of
Natural Sciences)

Meet: Auditorium, Ottawa Public Library
Laurier and Metcalfe Streets
(parking garage beneath)

Time: 8:00 p.m.

Tuesday
10 December

NATURALISTS ON TOUR - TWO ILLUSTRATED TALKS

THE F.O.N. TOUR OF EAST AFRICA
by Hue MacKenzie

THE C.N.F. TOUR OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
by Roger Foxall

Meet: Auditorium, Ottawa Public Library
Laurier and Metcalfe Streets

Time: 8:00 p.m.

ISSN 0041-0748

T R A I L & L A N D S C A P E

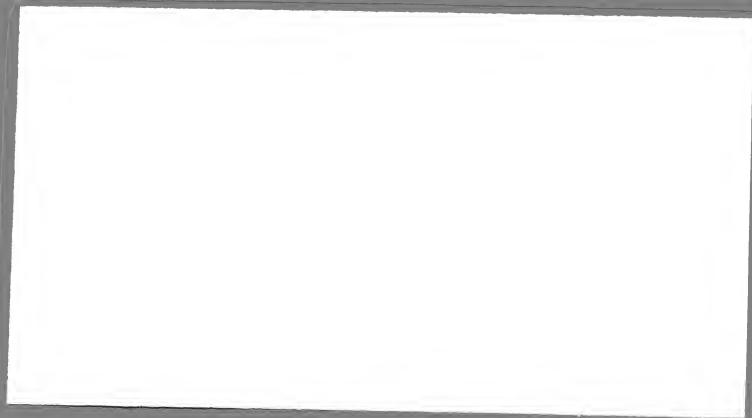
published by

THE OTTAWA FIELD-NATURALISTS' CLUB

Second Class Mail - Registration Number 2777
Postage paid in cash at Ottawa

Change of Address Notices and undeliverable Copies:
Box 3264 Postal Station C, Ottawa, Ont.
K1Y 4J5

Return postage guaranteed



Lithographed by
John Marquardt, Printer